



EmployeeUPDATE

Our Mission: To serve the people of North Carolina by enabling individuals, families and communities to be healthy and secure, and to achieve social and economic well-being.

A monthly publication for employees of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Where's my online newsletter?

You're used to getting newsletter online and in print-ready format ... so where is the online version this month?

For the past five years, the DHHS Employee Update has been faithfully written and produced for you, DHHS employees. You've had the choice to read both an online html version and a printable PDF version. From now on, however, the newsletter will be produced as an Adobe Acrobat (PDF) document only.

Why are we changing? In short, because recent strides in accessibility now make PDF documents readable for all.

It's difficult for some to understand how much of a barrier the web can present. The Internet seems like the ultimate democratic institution, distributing information widely so we can all make informed choices, hear a wide variety of voices on any given topic and be more plugged in to our world.

But for some, the web closes doors at every turn. The graphic interface can be mystifying for visually impaired users. Web content that includes audio with no captioning frustrates people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Web devices like touch screens present challenges to people with physical disabilities.

Accessibility to all is our goal, especially for this department, which serves people with all kinds of disabilities.

The web has been evolving for the better, and many accessibility issues are finding creative solutions. One such solution is the improved accessibility features of Adobe Acrobat.

Acrobat Professional now allows both a quick check and a full check of accessibility of documents. It allows the document creator to specify a tabbing order, so that screen readers for the visually impaired will know how to move through the document. It allows explanations of graphics to be inserted.

DHHS divisions that post PDFs to the web are encouraged to purchase Acrobat Professional and to train personnel in accessibility concerns and solutions. It is still possible to create inaccessible documents using this new software, so training and testing for accessibility are very important.

For the Employee Update, some will choose to read the document online, and some will choose to print it out to read. Managers should print out one copy and put it on a central bulletin board for their employees. ■

INSIDE TOP FEATURES

Stanly County pair is State's Top Paramedic Team, Page 2
NCIR Improves Health Care and Saves Dollars, Page 4
New DMA Wellness Room, Page 5

**DHHS is
one of Triangle's
"Best Workplaces
for Commuters"**

➡ **Page 3**



**DPH Offers an
Online Employee
Toolkit**

➡ **Page 6**



Stanly County pair is state's top paramedic team

Two paramedics from Stanly County unseated last year's defending champions and outperformed four other regional teams earlier this fall to grab the title as the state's top paramedic team.

Austin Nabet and Shane Lisenby were announced as the top team in the state during an awards banquet held at the conclusion of the 16th annual North Carolina Emergency Medicine Today Conference. It was the third time that Stanly team has won the competition.

The announcement followed recognition of the state's five regional winners of this year's competition, held Oct. 1 in Greensboro before a standing-room-only audience of more than 300 of their peers.

"This competition helps assure that North Carolinians receive the best care from their first responders," said Drexdal Pratt, chief of the N.C. Office of Emergency Medical Services, sponsors of the conference. "The regional competition and this championship require tremendous preparation by all the participants, and that helps to sharpen everyone's skills."

The paramedic competition also encourages continuation of valuable education and training, provides experience functioning under stressful conditions, and allows teams to represent their EMS agency for state recognition.

At the competition the teams were sequestered as each was called to respond to the same mock emergency,



1. Lisenby and Nabet stand with Pratt after their performance was rated tops in the state.

2. Winning team at work during the competition. Judges keep score.

3. Matt Trotta of Lincoln County administers to the 'epileptic girl' in the back seat of the truck.

4. Smith and Micacco of Union County treat the 'epileptic girl' outside the truck.

5. Wake paramedic Bachman (right) orders care for snakebite victim, far left, while Wells (center) checks on diabetic grandfather.

6. Crowd applauds wrap-up of Stanly County team's performance.

set at a boat landing at a lake. Four judges graded their performances. They were scored as they provided care to a diabetic grandfather who had taken his epileptic granddaughter's medication in error, causing him to have medical and communication problems, and eventually a heart attack beside his boat at the landing.

Cont. on page 5

DHHS named one of Triangle's "Best Workplaces for Commuters"

DHHS is one of many Triangle area employers working to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and make commuting less stressful and costly. It has now been named one of the area's Best Workplaces for Commuters.

In the past year, state agencies were asked to participate in the Triangle Best Workplaces for Commuters program. This is a public-private partnership recognizing employers who offer the highest level of commuter benefits to their employees in order to encourage them to take alternate methods of transportation to work. The program is sponsored by U.S. EPA and N.C. DOT and is housed at the Triangle J Council of Governments.

Best Workplaces for Commuters' participating employers must offer their employees superior commuting benefits such as employer-provided transit passes, vanpool subsidies, bike commuter facilities, on-site day care, and telework programs. To qualify, organizations must also provide a central point of contact and access to an Emergency Ride Home Program.

DHHS was awarded this designation this summer, and was recognized on Nov. 15 at the "Kick Gas Celebration" in Research Triangle Park. The award plaque, presented by Franklin Freeman of the Governor's Office at that event, is inscribed, "U.S. EPA and N.C. DOT recognize NC DHHS as one of the 2006 Best Workplaces for Commuters – Triangle Region – for providing your employees with outstanding commuter benefits that meet the National Standard of Excellence, help reduce traffic and air pollution, and improve the quality of life in the Triangle Region".

This recognition for DHHS came about through the efforts of Patsy West in the Division of Public Health's Epidemiology Section. West serves as the downtown parking coordinator for the Division of Public Health and as the Bus Pass Coordinator for all of DHHS with the exception of Mental Health. Through West's efforts, hundreds of DHHS employees in Raleigh commute to work in TTA vanpools or use the bus system.

For more information about Triangle Best Workplaces for Commuters, including a list of all Triangle employers that have won the award, visit www.trianglebwc.org. ■

BEST
Workplaces
for CommutersSM
Triangle
Region



Patty West displays the DHHS award plaque.

N.C. Immunization Registry improves healthcare and saves dollars

By the time they are two years old, over 20 percent of children in the United States have seen more than one medical provider. When medical records are scattered and available immunization histories are incomplete, it is difficult to accurately assess a child's immunization needs. Consequently, many children miss opportunities for immunization, while one in five U.S. children receives at least one unnecessary dose of vaccine by two years of age. Unnecessary immunizations waste a startling \$26.5 million in vaccine costs each year, and missed immunizations increase children's risk of contracting vaccine-preventable diseases.

Immunization registries not only improve health care, but can save money by ensuring that children get only the vaccines they need. At the same time, registries can improve medical office efficiency by reducing the time needed to review medical records for assessment and documentation of immunization status.

Over the past few years, the N.C. Immunization Branch has developed and launched a statewide immunization registry, appropriately named the North Carolina Immunization Registry (NCIR). An electronic reporting system, the NCIR is designed to be a secure, web-based clinical tool, and is the official source for North Carolina immunization information.

This registry will soon be used by all Universal Childhood Vaccine Distribution Program (UCVDP) providers in North Carolina. The



registry's primary function is to connect and share information among private provider offices, local health departments and other facilities that receive UCVDP-supplied vaccines.

One of the main benefits of the registry is that immunization providers are able to access all childhood immunizations administered in North Carolina, regardless of the medical home in which the immunizations were given.

The NCIR has started to take the place of handwritten charting of immunizations administered in the state. To date, all of North Carolina's local health departments and 300 private providers are using the registry. The participating providers have been trained to enter historical immunization data, vaccine inventory, and new immunizations. Overall, the response has been favorable, particularly with regard to ease in learning and using the system.

To date, the success of the NCIR has far exceeded expectations. During its years of inception and development, the NCIR project encountered and overcame numerous financial, political and technological barriers. Today, the system has been fully implemented into the offices of more than 25 percent of UCVDP providers,

exceeding the initial goal of 10 percent. Recruitment efforts continue, and the Immunization Branch hopes to have at least 75 percent of its providers using NCIR by the end of 2008.

The N.C. Immunization Branch recently distributed a survey to NCIR users to assess their degree of satisfaction with the registry and to identify any areas for improvement. The survey received 164 responses from LHDs and private providers. Among the key findings:

- 92 percent rate ease of data entry into the registry as "easy" or "very easy."
- 96 percent "agree" or "strongly agree" that having access to current immunization recommendations while accessing a child's record has been very valuable.
- 94 percent were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the use of the NCIR.
- 95 percent were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the customer service received from the NCIR help desk.

The N.C. Immunization Branch is extremely pleased with the results of the survey, and will continue to roll out the NCIR to vaccine providers across the state. Once fully implemented, the NCIR will provide parents, health care providers and communities with the information and data they need to ensure that all of our children are adequately protected against vaccine-preventable diseases. ■

New DMA Wellness Room Gives Employees Healthy Choices

The Division of Medical Assistance opened a Wellness Room in October to provide a safe place for employees to exercise during breaks in their workday.

The DHHS Wellness Initiative, with support from the N.C. State Health Plan, provided an opportunity for agencies and facilities in the department to apply for exercise equipment for their employees. The DMA Wellness Committee was one of 14 DHHS agency committees that applied and received either a commercial quality treadmill or stationary bicycle for their agencies in September. DMA got its treadmill through the Initiative, and employees donated two stationary bicycles and a step climber. The committee located an appropriate room and got everything set up.



DHHS Secretary Carmen Hooker Odom (center) cut the ribbon at the opening of the DMA Wellness Room. She is surrounded by some of the members of the DMA Wellness Committee, including Barbara Whitaker, Denise Menig, Kris Horton, Dawn Crocker, Brenda Jordan-Choate, Josie Grasse, and Sandra Reaves.

On-site exercise equipment in the workplace helps employees to be more active on a regular basis throughout the year. Shift work, long commutes, family obligations, and the expense of gym memberships make it difficult for many employees to establish routine times for physical activity. Workplace opportunities for physical activity help overcome these barriers.

In a 2005 survey, DHHS employees identified a place to exercise at work as the number one change in the work environment that would make the greatest improvement to their health. The DHHS Wellness Initiative responded to this need, and hopes to provide opportunities for additional interested agencies to receive exercise equipment. ■

Stanly County cont. from page 2

The paramedics were alerted to the situation by N.C. Division of Wildlife officers who were first at the scene. After their arrival, the paramedics discovered they had their hands more than full when a drunken boyfriend carried his girlfriend in minutes later, screaming in pain from a copperhead snake bite, and a check of the grandfather's pickup truck turned up his 5-year-old granddaughter unconscious in a car seat in the sun-baked cab.

"This was a tough one," Pratt said. "They had to pay attention to a lot of detail to figure it out."

The five regional winners and their counties are: Fred Lawson and Scott Brown from Stokes County Emergency Medical Services, last year's defending champions; Robby Smith and Devin Micacco of Union County EMS; Tony Graham and Matt Trotta of Lincoln County EMS; Michael Bachman and Jason Wells of Wake County EMS; and Burt Hendricks and Mike Lassiter of Wilson County EMS. ■

The Division of Public Health offers an online Employee Toolkit

The Division of Public Health has announced a useful online resource for DPH employees – the DPH Employee Toolkit. The Toolkit provides an easy way to find up-to-date resources and tools that inform, educate, and empower DPH employees.

Please take a few minutes to navigate through the Employee Toolkit at www.ncpublichealth.com/employees/empInfo.htm. The Toolkit is also accessible from the Public Health homepage at www.ncpublichealth.com by clicking on the “DPH Employee Toolkit” link on the left side of the page.



The Toolkit presently features four sections:

1. Pilot Accreditation Program
2. Human Resources
3. New Staff Orientation Materials
4. Guidance on Policy and Procedures

Coming soon is a “Just For You” section, which might include resources like walking maps for the division’s Six Forks Campus and downtown areas, links to the holiday schedule, and leave policies that are frequently referenced.

Division staff want to know if the Employee Toolkit is a helpful resource and are encouraging feedback about what resources employees would like to see added. Although they may not be able to implement every suggestion, each suggestion will be thoroughly considered. Feedback should be sent to denise.pavletic@ncmail.net.

If you are a DPH employee, please bookmark the Employee Toolkit and return periodically for new postings. ■

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If you are ready to quit, call the Quitline today.

The Quitline has been proven to increase your chances of quitting for good.

Brought to you by the N.C. Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch



Jalil Isa

iSalud y Saludos!

Colors around me

By now, you've probably just about finished hauling the last bag of dried leaves from your front yard in what is an annual ritual for many North Carolinians. Fall is well upon us. In fact, my birthday marked the last day of summer. That was back in late September. Now my favorite season of the year has brushed broad strokes of magnificent colors throughout our lovely state. This year, in particular, was a terrific year. As those of you who were around this time last year might recall, '05 was a dismal year for us avid 'leaf peepers.' I can't spell out the meteorological conditions that may have made for this, but I can just tell you what I missed last year was easily made up for this autumn.

I have made it a tradition to take off to the North Carolina mountains each year during this time of the season. Just a few weeks ago, I set off to Chimney Rock—a place I was surprised to have missed throughout my varied travels throughout this state. The view was certainly breathtaking. The drive throughout all the major roadways had something for everyone. And just a few weekends ago, my mother came to visit from south Florida. This was only the second time in her life that she had seen such fall colors. The last was during another visit to North Carolina that also happened to coincide with the peak color of au-

turn. In fact, she insisted on coming up during this very specific time of the year.

Like my mother, I had never seen the splendid view that covers much of our nation during autumn. Having spent my entire life in a state that is devoid of practically any color on its trees other than green, it was an overwhelming sight for me the first time I saw what autumn brings to places outside of Florida. It's almost like seeing snow for the first time. It's just one of the things you'll forever remember when it first happens later in life. Same thing with my mom—it was amusing to see her reaction when she first saw the scenery around her. She actually went out of her way to pick up dead leaves on the ground which she then took back with her to Miami and used to make a colorful, and exotic (by local standards), arrangement in her living room. Visitors have wondered if these were purchased at a store. She'll always make certain to point out that this is "just normal ground cover" where her son lives.

This trip was no different for her. She took back some more leaves. Of course, to some of you reading this, it may come as a surprise to hear of someone being so marveled by such an otherwise normal sight. But, again, when you've never seen such a thing, it can be enchanting. I'm happy to live

in a state that offers this kind of variety. Not just in weather, but in everything else the changing seasons bring. This is something one should keep in mind when encountering people coming to this state for the first time who've never lived outside tropical settings. It could even serve as a good conversation-starter. There are many people now living in North Carolina who may be seeing snow for the first time in their lives. These will all be experiences they will treasure if they're anything like my mother or me.

Maybe you can think about this next time you're dreading having to pick up all those leaves! In my case, I get the best of both worlds—I can enjoy the view without having to fuss with the leaf collection. Even I will admit, when I've had to help friends with this annual chore, it can become a real drag. But if that's the price to pay for this somewhat unique panorama, then it's a worthwhile chore that'll just remind me to be even that much more appreciative of the colors around me. ■

Jalil

Jeff Horton receives award

Jeff Horton, chief operating officer for the Division of Facility Services, received an award from the Association of Hospice and Home Care of North Carolina recognizing his contributions to improve the quality of care for home care patients in North Carolina.

The Ellen B. Winston Award, presented Oct. 30 by the association's leadership conference, is given in memory of Dr. Winston, who was the U.S. commissioner of welfare, president of the National Council on Aging, and chaired the White House Conference on Aging. She also served as chair of the (N.C.) Governor's Advisory Council on Aging.

Horton was nominated for the award for improvements to the state's licensure rules to enhance the quality of care for home care patients. Those include strengthening home care agency director qualifications and in-home aide qualifications, developing new geographical service area definitions, new licensure applicant training requirements and new survey requirements for licensed-only agencies.

The association is made up of professionals interested in the state's in-home health, hospice and community-based care industry. The award is given to people who have made a state-wide impact on home care and hospice.

Throughout her life, Dr. Winston championed state and federal efforts to advance home care as a more cost-effective and compassionate method of delivering health and supportive care. She was an advocate for in-home aide services that allow the elderly and others to remain independent in their homes as long as possible.

Also recently, Horton was elected president of the Association of Health Facility Survey Agencies during its annual conference earlier in the fall. AHFSA is a non-profit organization that provides a forum for health care regulatory agency directors and managers to address common interests, concerns and health care program issues.

State licensing and certification agencies across the U.S. are members of this organization. The organization works with the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, providers and



Jeff Horton

advocacy groups in planning, implementing and assessing the quality and effectiveness of health care programs.

Horton has worked with the Division of Facility Services since 1993. He served as surveyor and team leader with the Nursing Home Branch, assistant chief of the Acute Care Branch, chief of the Mental Health Licensure and Certification Section, and as chief of the Nursing Home Licensure and Certification Section. He also worked as a dietitian at state psychiatric hospitals prior to joining the division. ■

Dr. Casey is New DMA Dental Director

Mark Casey, DDS, was appointed dental director in the Division of Medical Assistance as of Sept. 11.

As dental director, Casey will focus on recruiting more providers, especially orthodontists and oral surgeons, and on educating recipients about available services and disease prevention. He also will be strengthening ties with dental schools, dental societies, the Legislature, Community Care of North Carolina, and the Division of Public Health. Finally, he'll help a cross-department team examine other states' cost-effective means of providing dental services to the Medicaid population.

"Dr. Casey is a thoughtful, diligent and well-respected dentist," said Dr. William Lawrence, Jr., DMA's deputy director of clinical affairs. "He'll bring a wealth of clinical experience and health policy training to DMA."



Dr. Mark Casey

Originally from the Pittsburgh area, Dr. Casey moved south to study history at Duke University, and has lived in either Florida or North Carolina ever since. After earning his dental degree at the University of North Carolina, he began work in a public health clinic in Cross City, Florida, 100

miles southeast of Tallahassee. Later positions took him to correctional settings in Florida and North Carolina and the Department of Veterans Affairs in Daytona Beach, Florida.

In 1993, while working in Florida, Dr. Casey obtained a Master's Degree in Health Policy and Administration from the University of North Carolina School of Public Health. His research interests include environmental safety and infection control, dental epidemiology, and the utilization of dental services in Medicare and Medicaid.

He lives with his wife and two daughters in North Raleigh. ■

DHHS retiree honored

Former Assistant North Carolina Office of Emergency Medical Services Chief Ed Browning received the Dr. George Johnson Award for his contributions and lifelong service to the enhancement and improvement of EMS in North Carolina.

The award was presented on behalf of the North Carolina EMS Advisory Council and the Office of Emergency Medical Services staff on Oct. 3 during the annual Emergency Medicine Today conference in Greensboro.

Browning, who retired last year, is the sixth recipient of the award which was first presented in 2000. It is named in honor of the former chairman emeritus of the Advisory Council.

Browning was recognized for his career, which began as an instructor at Appalachian State University and included his work as team leader for the Emergency Vehicle Operators Course (EVOC), revision of the mobile Emergency



Browning, center, received the Johnson Award

Cont. on page 10

Three receive N.C. APHA awards

Evelyn Foust, head of the HIV/STD Prevention and Care Branch in the Division of Public Health, has received the N.C. Public Health Association's Reynolds Award. The award was presented at the association's annual meeting on Oct. 12.

The award is one of N.C. APHA's most outstanding recognitions. It is given to the individual member of the association who has made the greatest contributions to public health in North Carolina during the past year.

Foust was selected for this prestigious award because of her dedication and leadership in preventing HIV and STDs and in providing care and treatment services. She is not only a statewide leader, but has also garnered recognition as a national leader. She has brought the critical needs of North Carolina and other southern states to the forefront of national awareness.



Evelyn Foust

"Evelyn has been fearless in helping North Carolina pioneer acute HIV testing and has reached out to local health departments and community organizations that are on the front lines in the fight against HIV/AIDS and

STDs," said State Health Director Leah Devlin. "She has set a high standard for innovative strategies to eliminate this greatest of health disparities.

"Evelyn has a real talent for connecting with any audience she is trying to reach, whether it is people who are outside our systems of care and on the fringes of society, health care professionals, or the state's and nation's top policy leaders. We are proud of her and of her accomplishments," Devlin said.

Also receiving awards at the conference were two other Division of Public Health professionals. Jennifer Anderson, a laboratory improvement consultant for the State Public Health Lab, was awarded the 2006 NC-PHA Laboratorian of the Year Award. Jennifer Bell Robinson, a public health dental hygienist for the Oral Health Section, was awarded the 2006 NCPHA Becky S. Bowden Outstanding Dental Hygienist Award. ■

DHHS retiree cont. from page 9

Medical Technician program, and his work at OEMS where he began as education programs consultant in 1980. He was promoted to assistant chief-education in 1985 and assistant chief of OEMS in January 2001. Browning was recognized for his development of the Certification Inventory System (CIS), used for processing applications and scoring of examinations for all credentials offered by OEMS. He was a key leader in the EMS rules revisions, worked to coordinate activities with the

NC Medical Board, and was noted for his ability to achieve consensus among individuals and groups which often had widely divergent viewpoints. ■

Farmworker Health Program receives award for excellence

The North Carolina Farmworker Health Program in the DHHS Office of Rural Health and Community Care recently received the Sister Cecilia B. Abhold Award from Farmworker Health Services, Inc. The award is granted for farmworker health organizations that show a commitment to community outreach, community relations, farmworker accountability, organizational integration of outreach efforts, and cultural and linguistic competence.

The awarding agency, Farmworker Health Services, Inc. (FHSI), is a national non-profit health care organization working with local communities to improve the quality of life of farmworker families. Since 1970, Farmworker Health Services Inc. has been the leading organization for the promotion, delivery, and enhancement of health outreach and prevention strategies for farmworkers and their families. In honor of Sister Cecilia, who served as the first Executive Director for Farmworker Health Services, Inc. for 20 years, FHSI presents an award for excellence in farmworker health



Oscar Gomez, executive director of Farmworker Health Services, Inc., presented the award to Melissa Miles, program manager, and Elizabeth Freeman Lambar, program director, N.C. Farmworker Health Program, Office of Rural Health and Community Care.

outreach services to a migrant community health center or migrant voucher program in the East Coast, Midwest and Western migrant stream forums.

Since 1993, the North Carolina Farmworker Health Program has worked with agencies throughout the state to increase access to health care for migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families. In 2005, the program provided services to 10,930 farmworkers with more than 15,000 health education and case management encounters and 5,000 medical encounters. The pro-

gram was selected for this award for its extensive outreach services; numerous collaborations with other state and local agencies in North Carolina; use of farmworker feedback through surveys, focus groups, and evaluations; their culturally appropriate services; and their popular approach to providing health education.

The award was presented at the East Coast Migrant Stream Forum held in Myrtle Beach, S.C. The Forum is an annual conference dedicated to improving health outcomes and health care delivery to migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families along the East Coast. The conference targets health care providers, outreach staff, lay health workers and administrators from federally-funded Migrant and Community Health Centers and other community-based health, social, legal, and faith-based organizations that serve and advocate for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. ■

Touch-screen information “kiosks” win national award

The Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response, in the Division of Public Health, has been recognized at the national level for its innovative use of public information kiosks to promote readiness for natural and man-made disasters. The interactive kiosks contain touch-screen computers that enable people to access information, to watch and hear video clips, and to ask questions (and get answers!) about various topics.

The National Public Health Information Coalition (NPHIC) presented the 2006 Silver Award for Excellence in Public Health Communication in the New Media (Outsourced) category to communication coordinator Bill Furney and SmartVista Representative Carrie Reuben at its annual conference in October. DHHS Hispanic Outreach Coordinator Jalil Isa was also a recipient of the award but did not attend the meeting held in Portland, Oregon.



Furney (left) shows the touch screen to Dr. Julie Casani.

The conference brings together public information officers from public health agencies across the nation and its territories. Hundreds of entries in several different categories were submitted to the competition for judging. Being recognized at the national level in a competition that includes major agencies in New York, California and other states is a reflection of the quality of work that is being done in North Carolina. ■

Mecklenburg County follows DHHS lead to eliminate health disparities

This fall, Mecklenburg County Health Department rolled out its new recommendations for addressing health disparities in Mecklenburg County and its task force report, “Eliminating Health Disparities: A Call to Action.” The Mecklenburg plan is based on the N.C. DHHS 2003 state plan, “From Disparity to Parity in Health: Eliminating Health Disparities

Call to Action.” The DHHS plan is on the N.C. Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities (OMHHD) website, www.ncminorityhealth.org.

Racial and ethnic minorities now make up 43 percent of Mecklenburg County’s population. As in the rest of the state, the county’s minorities suffer a disproportionate burden of illness, adverse health conditions and death. The goal of the new plan is for everyone in the county to “enjoy good health regardless of their race/ethnicity, disability or socioeconomic status.”

Cont. on page 14

Meningococcal PSA wins national contest

Earlier this year, the N.C. Immunization Branch, in partnership with the Woman's Club of Raleigh, Wake County Medical Society, Department of Public Instruction, and Enloe High School, created an outreach campaign designed to educate parents and students about the potentially fatal meningococcal meningitis disease and the available vaccine that may help prevent it.

Four students from Enloe High School's video production class created a television Public Service Announcement (PSA) for this campaign. The PSA was designed to educate high school students of the dangers of meningococcal disease, and to encourage them to receive the vaccination that can provide protection against the disease.

The television PSAs were distributed to every North Carolina high school and television station, in the hopes of reaching parents and students with this important message. In addition, the PSA was submitted to a national contest sponsored by the California Distance Learning Health Network (CDLHN). The purpose of the contest was to help spread the word about the importance of meningococcal vaccination. The CDLHN asked teens between the ages of 15 and 19 to submit an original PSA that encourages college freshmen



Enloe High School students Tucker Idol, Aaron Motsinger, Natalie Sprague, Dana Vaughn and Scott Snyder pose with First Lady Mary Easley at the meningococcal PSA kick-off event.

planning to live in dormitories to get the meningococcal vaccine.

The Immunization Branch recently learned that the meningococcal PSA created by the Enloe students won the national contest. One of the lucky students will receive a video iPod, and the PSA is now featured on the CDLHN website (www.cdlhn.com) and the Got My Shot website (<http://gotmyshot.org/>). In addition, the PSA will be

included on a DVD about meningococcal disease that the CDLHN will distribute.

To view the winning PSA, please visit <http://gotmyshot.org/index.pacq>, click on "Gallery" (on the left side toolbar), select Podcasts, and select the fourth PSA (the picture is of a sick-looking boy on a stretcher). Make sure to turn up the volume on your computer! ■

LeadershipDHHS II tours Murdoch Center

LeadershipDHHS II participants were hosted by the Murdoch Center in Butner on Oct. 10. It was the first time one of the sessions had been held outside of Raleigh.

Mike Moseley, director of the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, and Dr. Aleck Myers, director of the Murdoch Center, were generous with their time and attention. Director Moseley discussed the current status of the transformation of mental health, developmental disabilities and substance abuse services, sharing some of the political, media and funding challenges that impact the process on a regular basis. He answered numerous questions and accompanied the group on the tour of several residential cottages on the campus.

Dr. Myers explained the various programs offered at Murdoch and described the people served by the



A beautiful fall day made the trip and the tour of the Murdoch state-operated facility all the more enjoyable for LeadershipDHHS participants.



On the guided tour, the visitors got a first-hand look at the caring service and welcoming environment provided to residents at the Murdoch Center.

center. Murdoch's approximately 1,700 employees care for severe or profoundly retarded individuals who have a related developmental disability or behavioral challenges. Many of the center's residents are non-ambulatory, geriatric and frail. In spite of these mental and physical limitations, it was clear that a mutual respect and friendships exist between staff and residents. Reflective of the season, there were Halloween decorations everywhere, reflecting a true pride of place and service.

Members of LeadershipDHHS commented that the opportunity to witness life in one of our state facilities was gratifying and helped bring a clearer understanding of how individual positions in numerous DHHS divisions support this kind of service to the public. Clearly, getting out of Raleigh was an excellent idea and will be repeated in future sessions. ■

Mecklenburg County cont. from page 14

The plan provides a strategic framework to identify, monitor and address health disparities in Mecklenburg County. The Mecklenburg County Health Department is taking a leadership role in promoting the plan and collaborating with external partners such as policy-makers, community and faith-based organizations, civic groups, educational institutions, health care providers, and businesses. This alliance will work to make the vision of health parity—equal health for all populations—a reality for everyone in Mecklenburg County.

OMHHD chief Barbara Pullen-Smith joined the Mecklenburg County health director, Dr. E. Winters Mabry; county manager Harry L. Jones, Sr.; and county general manager Janice Jackson in presenting the county's Call to Action to the County Commissioners. ■

Awareness is goal of VR fund-raising event

The Pinehurst Unit of Vocational Rehabilitation participated in Pathway to Awareness, sponsored by the National Alliance on Mental Illness - Moore County, the weekend of Sept. 30-Oct. 1.

With the goal of funding local events to promote awareness to the community about brain disorders—and what they are and are not—the hopes are to expand the support network to people who are being affected by recent changes in the mental health system.

The event kicked off with actress Patty Duke, author of *Brilliant Madness: Living with Manic Depressive Illness*, speaking at Sandhills Community College. The event was co-sponsored by Sandhills Community College Foundation.

On Sunday, individuals participated in the Pathway to Awareness walk and a balloon release in memory or honor of loved ones. All proceeds from the events were used to support Pathway to Awareness and promote positive impact on the lives of people with brain illness and their loved ones. ■



Vocational Rehabilitation staff members sport their NAMI-Pathway to Awareness T-shirts during the Pathway to Awareness event earlier this fall. Left to Right: Jim Ritter-VR counselor; Vera Parks, case worker technician; Christen Thacker and Gloria Dabbs, VR counselors; and lead office assistant Phyllis McMillan.

WSSU students visit VR



Future VR counselors?

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation recently hosted students (pictured left with VR Director Linda Harrington, center) in Winston-Salem State University's Master in Rehabilitation Counseling program. Several agency assistant directors and staff briefed the students on how VR can make a difference for people with disabilities who want to join or re-join the workforce. The visit is part of the agency's outreach to a number of rehab master's programs to interest students in rehabilitation counseling careers.



Registration is free, so sign up online now to take the challenge!

- ✓ Chat with your fellow Holiday Challengers across the state to get moral support every step of the way!
- ✓ Ask the experts your questions on our Holiday Challenge message board.
- ✓ Receive a free weekly newsletter chock full of tips, recipes, and more.
- ✓ Download tools to monitor your progress.

The Challenge: No weight gain during the holiday season!



November 13 through December 31

DHHS WELLNESS INITIATIVE— ONE YEAR LATER

Suzanna Young,
DHHS Wellness Initiative Director

Wellness Committees throughout the department have been working the past year as part of the DHHS Wellness Initiative to increase support and opportunities in the workplace for employees wanting to become more physically active, eat healthier foods, avoid tobacco, and better manage stress. This support in the workplace can help employees reduce their risk of developing chronic diseases and help control health care costs both for employees and for the state's self-insured employee health plan. A new Wellness Council made up of representatives from every DHHS division, office, and facility has developed policy recommendations to improve support for wellness throughout the department.

After only one year, some remarkable changes at many DHHS worksites are already making it easier for employees to lead healthier, more active lives. The number of workplaces where employees have daily access to exercise equipment has increased from 14 to 22, and the number of agencies with policies supporting physical activity increased from zero to 29. For one example, see the article in this issue about the Division of Medical Assistance's new fitness room.

The number of DHHS worksites with healthier snack and lunch selections available has more than doubled, and the number of tobacco cessation programs offered on-site to interested employees has increased from 3 to 17 sites in the past year.

If you would like to see these types of changes at your workplace, let your wellness committee know about your interests and work with them to make your worksites more supportive of employees staying fit and healthy. During



Mark Benton, senior deputy director and chief operating officer, tries out the treadmill in DMA's new fitness room (This photo was part of page 5 story).

November and December all employees have a special opportunity to provide feedback to their wellness committees and to the Department about wellness programs by filling out a short on-line survey. Every employee is invited to complete the survey, which asks about participation in wellness activities and the types of wellness activities you would prefer in the coming year. Just click on this link, <http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB225QCACYLZ4>, and answer a few quick survey questions. The survey takes about three minutes to complete. Individual responses to the survey are completely anonymous.

If you have already completed this survey, the link will take you to a summary of all responses to the survey.

Adoption Profile

Introducing RayQwon

RayQwon is a delightful boy with a desire to grow, jump, play and learn. He is an attractive and charming child who tends to have a positive effect on everyone he meets. RayQwon loves to show his affection by giving hugs. He enjoys playing with transportation toys and watching cartoons so he can retell the stories later. RayQwon loves drawing and creating animation on the computer. His artwork reveals a great deal of depth and detail.

RayQwon attends mainstream classes at school. He is now able to hear and is making progress with a special implant. Using American Sign Language helps RayQwon to communicate his needs and wants. With the help of tutoring he is making academic progress, as well. Transitioning to different areas can be challenging for RayQwon. A structured classroom setting and direct supervision help him stay on task and maintain acceptable conduct. While a feeding tube is sometimes utilized, RayQwon is not totally dependent on it.



RayQwon
b. March 22, 1996

A Family for RayQwon

RayQwon is in need of an adoptive family that can provide a consistent, structured and nurturing home. They must be affluent in American Sign Language and a medical background would be ideal. The family will need to keep all medical appointments and advocate for RayQwon's medical, educational and psychological requirements. They should also be willing to utilize and support groups and activities with other deaf children. RayQwon should be the only child in the family to assure that he receives the attention and support he needs. Continued contact with his foster family will be important. (NC #049-821). For more information on this child or adoption and foster care, in general, call NC Kids Adoption and Foster Care Network toll free at 1-877-NCKIDS-1 (1-877-625-4371). ■